

Application No. 09/986,374
Art Unit 1711

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Presently Amended) A method of preparing a low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber latex, which comprises adding a protease having an exopeptidase activity to a natural rubber latex and aging the natural rubber latex, thereby to decompose a protein in the latex to such a degree that the protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 4500 or more, are not detected.

2. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the protein and the decomposition product thereof in the latex are removed after decomposing the protein.

3. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 2, wherein the protein and the decomposition product thereof are removed by a centrifugation treatment.

4. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the pH of the latex is adjusted to a neutral range before treating with the protease having an exopeptidase activity.

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5. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low allergie allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the protease having an exopeptidase activity is produced by microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* or *Rhizopus*.

6. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low allergie allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 5, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* are microorganisms which belong to *Aspergillus oryzae*.

7. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low allergie allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 5, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* are microorganisms which belong to *Aspergillus mellus*.

8. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low allergie allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 5, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Rhizopus* are microorganisms which belong to *Rhizopus oryzae*.

9. (Presently Amended) The method of preparing a low allergie allergenic natural rubber latex according to claim 1, wherein the decomposition treatment of the protein is carried out in the presence of a surfactant.

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10. (Original) A method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex, which comprises adding an alkali protease to a natural rubber latex, thereby to decompose a protein in the latex, adding a protease having an exopeptidase activity, thereby to further decompose the protein and a decomposition product thereof in the latex, and removing the protein and the decomposition product thereof.

11. (Original) The method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex according to claim 10, wherein the protein and the decomposition product thereof are removed by a centrifugation treatment.

12. (Original) The method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex according to claim 10, wherein the pH of the latex is adjusted to a neutral range before treating with the protease having an exopeptidase activity.

13. (Original) The method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex according to claim 10, wherein the protease having an exopeptidase activity is produced by microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* or *Rhizopus*.

14. (Original) The method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex according to claim 13, wherein the microorganisms which

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belong to the genus *Aspergillus* are microorganisms which belong to *Aspergillus oryzae*.

15. (Original) The method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex according to claim 13, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Aspergillus* are microorganisms which belong to *Aspergillus mellus*.

16. (Previously Amended) The method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex according to claim 13, wherein the microorganisms which belong to the genus *Rhizopus* are microorganisms which belong to *Rhizopus oryzae*.

17.. (Original) The method of preparing a deproteinized natural rubber latex according to claim 10, wherein the decomposition treatment of the protein is carried out in the presence of a surfactant.

18. (Presently Amended) A low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber obtained by a decomposition treatment of a protein, wherein the protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 4500 or more, are not ~~detected~~, detected;

wherein said decomposition treatment is adding a protease having an exopeptidase activity to a natural rubber latex and aging the natural rubber latex.

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19. (Presently Amended) The low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber according to claim 18, wherein a protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 1500 or more, are not detected.

20. (Presently Amended) The low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber according to claim 18, wherein a content index of an ~~allergie~~ allergenic protein capable of producing an IgE-class antibody in a human blood serum is 10 µg/g or less.

21. (Presently Amended) The low ~~allergie~~ allergenic natural rubber according to claim 20, wherein the content index of the allergic protein is 5 µg/g or less.

22. (Presently Amended) A deproteinized natural rubber obtained by a treatment for decomposition ~~treatment~~ and a ~~removing~~ treatment of for removing a protein, wherein

the content of the protein is 0.02% or less in terms of a nitrogen content,

an absorption at 3280 cm⁻¹ is not recognized in an infrared absorption spectrum, and

the protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 4500 or more, are not ~~detected~~.
detected;

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wherein the treatments comprise adding an alkali protease to a natural rubber latex, thereby to decompose a protein in the latex, adding a protease having an exopeptidase activity, thereby to further decompose the protein and a decomposition product thereof in the latex, and removing the protein and the decomposition product thereof.

23. (Original) The deproteinized natural rubber according to claim 22, wherein a protein and a protein decomposition product, which have a number-average molecular weight of 1500 or more, are not detected.

24. (Presently Amended) The deproteinized natural rubber according to claim 22, wherein a content index of an ~~allergie~~ allergenic protein capable of producing an IgE-class antibody in a human serum is 10 µg/g or less.

25. (Presently Amended) The deproteinized natural rubber according to claim 24, wherein the content index of the ~~allergie~~ allergenic protein is 5 µg/g or less.